



*Vol. 1.*

LUNATICS SPECIAL OBJECTS OF BENEVOLENT ATTENTION AND  
EFFORT.

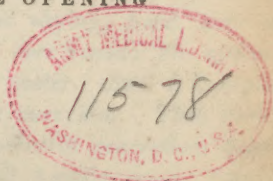
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A

# SERMON

DELIVERED AT THE OPENING

OF THE



# OHIO LUNATIC ASYLUM,

NOVEMBER 25, 1838.

**By Rev. CHARLES FITCH, A. M.**

INSTRUCTOR IN THE OHIO STATE PRISON.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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COLUMBUS, Nov. 27, 1838.

Dear Sir :

Many persons, who heard the discourse which you delivered last Sabbath afternoon, at the opening of the OHIO ASYLUM for Lunatics, have expressed a desire that it should be published. For this reason, and because it is our opinion that it is well calculated to make a favorable impression on the public mind respecting this important Institution, we take the liberty of asking a copy for publication.

Yours very Respectfully,

JAMES HOGE,  
ALFRED KELLEY,  
SAMUEL CROSBY,  
BELA LATHAM,  
CLARK RUNYON.

To the Rev. JAMES HOGE, D. D.,  
and Messrs. ALFRED KELLEY,  
SAMUEL CROSBY, BELA LATHAM,  
and CLARK RUNYON.

Gentlemen :

Confiding in the opinion you express, that the Sermon delivered on the 25th ult. at the opening of the OHIO LUNATIC ASYLUM, is "calculated to make a favorable impression on the public mind respecting that important Institution;" and unwilling to withhold any service, however feeble, that may tend to promote its interests, I cheerfully consent to furnish you with a copy for publication.

With sentiments of profound respect,

Your humble Servant,

CHARLES FITCH.

COLUMBUS, Dec. 4, 1838.



# SERMON.

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MATTHEW xvii. 14, 18.

*And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son; for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil, and he departed out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour.*

My friends, I am called to address you to-day on an occasion of deep and affecting interest. The place, the object, and the time; all concur to render it such. The *place* where we are met is the OHIO LUNATIC ASYLUM; the *object* of our meeting is publicly and solemnly, in acts of devotion, to dedicate this Institution to the purposes for which it has been established—the direct benefit of a most unhappy portion of our fellow men, and through their good the glory of God; and to seek *His* blessings upon it, who, amidst the multiplied objects of his ministrations on earth, pitied and relieved the miserable lunatic;—and the *time*, which marks our assemblage, is the holy day of the Lord, and the *day* which throws open the doors of this Institution for the reception of the objects of its charity, and which witnesses the commencement of its work of mercy.

I confess, that, though a stranger among you, and in a great measure a stranger to your institutions; and though it has often been my privilege to share the part of a spectator, at least, on occasions of soul-thrilling interest, the *present occasion* has kindled in me a glow of interest seldom experienced;—an interest, which makes me regard it as a privilege of high eminence to be here, and especially to take part in the transactions of this scene. Nor can I be mistaken, I think, in

the persuasion, that the sentiment I have expressed glows more fervently in the bosoms of those around me than in my own; and has taken an earlier, and stronger, and more extensive hold of your affections than mine; and excites emotions in you which it would be more than presumption in me to arrogate. It would be worse than folly in me, therefore, to attempt to awaken an interest, which, I know, is already alive; or to increase emotions already too big for utterance. It is *enough*, and all I dare hope for, if I may be the humble instrument of confirming and perpetuating the interest now felt in this Institution; and of giving to the emotions now experienced in relation to it a direction, which shall cause them to result most efficiently in its future and permanent prosperity.

With this design and desire, I have selected the sacred narrative just read, as an illustrious exhibition of that benevolent regard to the wants and woes of mankind, which not only originated the mission of God's dear Son to our earth, but which led him to meet and to relieve those wants and those woes, so far as it was consistently possible for him to do, in all the varied forms, and to all the vast extent, in which they presented themselves;—an exhibition of that very principle, which, we believe, originated this noble Institution; and which must sustain and carry forward its future operations to their desired and glorious results. The present use, which I wish to make of this affecting narrative, is simply to illustrate and enforce three truths, which, it seems to me, are fairly deducible from it, and specially deserving our thoughts on this occasion. The *first* is, that in the extent of its exercise christian benevolence is universal; the *second* is, that lunatics are specially deserving objects of benevolent attention and effort; and the *third* is, that, in laboring for the benefit of lunatics to the utmost of *their* necessities and of *our* ability, we do that only to which we are prompted, encouraged, and bound by the spirit, example, and inculcations of Christ.

The *first* truth then upon which we would dwell for a little is, that in the extent of its exercise christian benevolence is universal. *That* benevolence is not confined in its exercise to the degrees of consanguinity—to families, to neighborhoods, to communities, to nations, to climes. No; it extends to all people of every clime, and color, and nation, and age, and sex, and condition. It selects not an individual here, and an individual there, to whom it extends the hand of charity, and upon whom it expends all its resources of relief. No; it goes out to, and throws its arms around, and pours out its treasures of good upon all the pitiable of human want and suffering. So obvious is this truth, that it needs not a moment's consideration for the sake simply of removing doubt in any religiously enlightened and reflecting mind.



Such a mind, in contemplating the infinite benevolence of God's character; in recurring to the entire series of his dispensations towards an entire race of sinful and miserable beings; and above all, in surveying the mission of God's dear Son—the life he led, the spirit he exhibited, the works of mercy he wrought, and the lessons of beneficence he inculcated, sees enough to render its conviction vivid and deep, and to settle it forever as an established principle to be shaken no more than the consciousness of its own existence, that the benevolence which God requires; which the example and religion of Christ his Son inculcates; which it is the work of his Spirit to beget in the soul; and which those exercise, whom *He* loves to acknowledge as his regenerated offspring, is and must be as extensive in its exercise as are the human subjects of want, disease, sin, and woe; nay, as extensive as are the relations we sustain to moral beings in the universe of God.

It is specially grateful to such a mind to contemplate this essential and glorious feature in the character of God, and to witness its goings forth in universal good to the creatures, whom his hands have made. But there is one peculiar trait in this attribute of God, which renders it a still more grateful object of contemplation. It is, that, while in the expansiveness of its exercise, it takes in the universe of being, it overlooks or passes by, in the great mass, no individual; but makes each one the subject of the good it dispenses no less than though he were the only one upon whom that good could be expended.

How strikingly is this *universal particularity* (if the expression be admissible) of divine benevolence exemplified in the doings of our blessed Saviour! It is wonderful to see, that while the great object of his mission was to benefit a world by giving his life a ransom for it—an object, which he never, for a moment, lost sight of; and to which, as to a great focal point, all his thoughts, purposes, and acts evidently tended; still no human subject of want, or of distress ever met his eye, or solicited his benevolent attention, who received not that attention, which the circumstances of the case called for. No matter how great the multitude that solicited his aid; no matter how varied, and extensive, and pressing their wants; no matter how loathsome, and confirmed, and desperate the maladies with which they were afflicted, even though they were the most desperate and dreaded subjects of raging lunacy, and of demoniacal possessions; no matter how young, how obscure, how neglected, how poor, how degraded, how lost to hope the miserable beings, who presented themselves for his almighty and benevolent aid, that aid was never—never withheld. The same benevolence, which led him to feed the hungry thousands, who followed his footsteps and hung upon his lips to receive his instructions; and which

led him to heal the multitudes that crowded around him, and cried for relief ; led him also to recal the dead from the putrefactions of the tomb ; to expel the devil from the daughter of the poor woman of Canaan ; to give soundness to the helpless and neglected cripple at the pool of Bethesda ; and to rescue from the power of Satan, and restore to mental saneness, and to the bosom of parental affection the poor lunatic boy, to whom his attention had been called by the simple and well nigh despairing importunity of an afflicted father. Here then, in the divine Author of our religion, we have a perfect exemplification of that benevolence, whose motto is, “do good to all as you have opportunity ;” and which, possessed by all, who have “the mind of Christ,” leads them to open the hand of beneficence, and to give relief to all their suffering brethren in the flesh, whom their eye can pity, or their hand can succor.

The *second* truth we proposed to contemplate is, that lunatics are specially deserving objects of benevolent attention and effort. We say *specially deserving objects* of benevolent attention and effort. And that for two reasons. The first is, that their case is, of all others, the most desperate ; and from this extreme criticalness demanding the more immediate, skillful, and energetic attention. The second is, that, although desperate, their case is not hopeless. It is possible, that the mind, so long as it retains its connection with the material organs of sensation, the only mediums through which *we* can approach it, disordered essentially and sadly though it may be, *may* nevertheless, be reached effectually by timely and appropriate remedies.

It is not without good reason, that insanity has been regarded, in all past time, as among the most appalling, most inveterate and uncontrollable, and most certain in its ultimate, death-producing result of all the maladies, which man is heir to. And no wonder ; for here is seen a disease, whose cause is remote and obscure, and whose nature is complex and intricate. And, wholly unlike other complex diseases, which are composed of two or more physical diseases, the causes of which are readily traced, this is found to be composed, ordinarily, of both a physical and mental disease ; the one originating and sustaining the other ; the remote cause of which, perhaps, is undiscovered and undiscoverable. When a confirmed consumption is seen laying waste the vital functions, diminishing the strength, and taking down the mortal fabric little by little ; or when an inveterate cancer is seen seizing and gnawing with silent but keen rapacity upon some outer organ of the body, consuming the system as it goes, and thus making its steady and resistless way to the citadel of life, confidence in human aid fails, hope dies, and the victim is gradually yielded, reluctant though it may be,



to the fatal result. Still more suddenly and effectually, if possible, is medical skill baffled, and confidence in its efficacy extinguished, when two antagonist diseases are found to have assailed the system together, and are seen contending for the privilege—sad privilege indeed!—of inflicting the last fatal blow that shall cause the earthly tenement to fall; and when the remedies, applied to break up and dislodge the one, serve only to strengthen the other, and facilitate its work of death. But when the mind and the body, both deranged, are seen to come in collision; and the entire functions of the one seem to be arrayed in resolute and dreadful conflict with the entire functions of the other, each intent upon gaining the mastery, and winning the laurel of victory in the subjugation of the one, and the disrapture of both;—and when, in this fearful war of the mind and the body, the former hides itself in mazes and darkness, and refuses to give intelligence of itself, or of its antagonist, and nothing can be learned or known of either, except what is gathered from the doleful wastes of health and strength, which mark the track of both; ah! then—then it is, that science and skill confounded, confidence lost, and hope expired, the miserable victim of mental and physical disease is abandoned to his fate; and is either driven from the abodes of men, who fear his presence, and compelled to end his days in solitude and chains; or is suffered to wander to and fro on the face of the earth a vagabond and pest; or dwell among the tombs, to whose sleeping and dreaded tenants he seems nearest assimilated and allied. It is not, as I said, without reason, therefore, that the case of the miserable victims of lunacy should be regarded, for the most part, as beyond the reach of human prescriptions; and that it has been deemed meeting the utmost demands of charity to put under the restraint of bars, and bolts, and fetters their power of harming themselves or others; and thus to prolong in circumstances barely tolerable a pitiable existence, till the system, prostrated by long confinement, consumed with feverish excitement, and actually choked and stifled in its operations for want of the vital and sustaining principle, pure and wholesome air, finally yielded to the operation of so formidable a combination of life-taking causes.

But appalling as are these symptoms of lunacy, considered as constituting a physical disease, and as affecting the present life only, there is another feature of the disease, which renders it incomparably more formidable and terrific. It is its moral influence in forming the character, and in deciding the destiny of the undying soul in the life to come. With the knowledge we derive from revelation and from reason of the exercises of the mind, which are absolutely requisite to adapt its powers to the state and employments of a world of holiness, and thus to qualify them for its happiness;—and with our knowledge of the origi-



nal and wonted exercises of the mind—being the reverse of what they should be—and of the time and manner, in which the needful change in those exercises is to be experienced, if ever; we cannot but look with intense interest,—an interest of mingled compassion, anxiety, and despair,—upon the soul precluded apparently, in whole or in part, from the application of *those means of grace*, attended with human and divine agencies, which God has devised to change it, and work its preparation for heaven. How, we are led to ask despairingly,—how is that precious soul, shrouded and bewildered in the darkness of estrangement from truth and common sense; in which the light of reason flickers only feebly, and at intervals; and all of whose powers are out of course, running wild, and clashing in utter confusion, uncontrolled and uncontrollable,—how is that soul to be reached, and the moral means and influences of the gospel to be so made to bear upon it as to produce order where now is confusion? as to calm the now raging and ungovernable passions? as to bring back the light of reason, and set conscience at the helm of action? as, in fine, to rectify all its moral disorders, purify its affections, and give a heaven-ward direction to all its exercises? This is the problem of difficult solution, which has confounded the wisdom of ages, and crippled or restrained the efforts of benevolence, and caused humanity to weep in silent sadness over the forlorn object of its sympathies, whom, it was supposed, it could not reach with its aid. Hence, while this problem remained without satisfactory solution, the miserable lunatic was regarded as an anomaly in the worlds of mind and of matter; and as holding a solitary and isolated condition, inaccessible utterly by any ascertained means of medical or moral treatment. And hence too, while some have contended, that the disease was to be met, if met at all, by medical prescriptions alone; others have contended, that moral means were the only needful and efficient remedy; and others still have maintained, that, in confirmed lunacy, both medical and moral treatment were alike unavailing; and that both tended to injure, not to benefit. By the last named class of individuals, lunacy has been regarded, I imagine, in the light of a direct and judicial visitation of Providence, with which it would be presumption in man to interfere, rather than as a disease subject to the ordinary laws of matter or of mind. They, accordingly, have chosen to adopt the “let alone system;” not doubting, that God, who inflicted the fearful calamity, would, if he saw fit, in due time remove it. This view of the subject has received, I imagine, its chief support from the fact,—if it had not its origin in the fact,—that the cases of lunacy or madness recorded in Scripture are all either connected or identified with lemoniacal possessions; and that, in all such cases, divine and mirac-

ulous power was requisite to expel the evil spirit, and restore the unhappy being, whom that spirit was allowed, for a time, to vex and worry, to soundness of mind and of body. Thus, in the case of the youthful lunatic, which was regarded utterly beyond the reach of the physician's skill; for which parental affection had sought the aid of Christ's disciples but in vain; and in behalf of which, as a last, despairing resort, the interposition of Christ himself was implored, the devil was the great power to be overcome, whose presence and control were the chief causes of disease, and from which their miserable victim was to be delivered before health could return. And our blessed Saviour adds his testimony to the inveteracy of the case, and to the great difficulty of affording the needful relief when he says, "this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." This is, probably, a fair specimen of all the cases of demoniacal possessions recorded in the New Testament. And without staying to expose the fallacy of supposing, that those possessions were nothing more than certain peculiar and inveterate forms of disease; or without attempting to prove an identity in the forms of lunacy as they now exist, and the forms in which demoniacal possessions presented themselves in the days of our Saviour, I think we are certainly justified in deducing from the comparison of them four important and deeply interesting conclusions, viz: first, that many cases of lunacy, with which we meet at the present day, have some features, at least, strongly analogous to the demoniacal possessions of ancient times;—second, that now as well as then mental derangement is ordinarily attended with derangement of body;—third, that the case of the lunatic now, as of the demoniac then, is, in every view we can take of it, truly deplorable, desperate, and alarming;—yea, bordering hard on utter remedilessness;—and fourth, that, if met successfully at all, lunacy is to be met, not by miraculous agency,—God having confined that agency to special times for special purposes, when the great ends for which it was employed were not to be accomplished by any means known to the men of those generations,—but by human agency in the application of means, developed in the progress of science, and forming a treatment peculiar, appropriate, and decisive.

By some, I know, this desperation of the mental disease is deemed an effectual bar to all efforts for its removal, and is plead as an apology for passing by on the other side its miserable victim, cast down, wounded, stripped of his glory, unbefriended, and dying. Nevertheless, I have adduced it, and must still urge it as an argument that pleads irresistably in tones of despairing agony for aid. Let us test the soundness of this argument. Is it not a uniform principle in the law of self-preservation, that the very desperation of our case, when property, or



reputation, or health, or life is in jeopardy, conduces to the most desperate exertions? Is the life of a man drowning far out at sea in the unfathomable deep, less worthy an effort to save than though he were drowning near shore in ten feet of water? When do you gather the greatest amount of medical skill around the sick bed of a relative, and most assiduously and urgently apply the remedies prescribed—when that relative is a little sick, or when a violent and desperate disease is making rapid and fearful inroads upon his constitution? When that fatal disease, the Cholera, was among our citizens, making such dreadful havoc of health and life, what occasioned the haste, and urgency, and assiduity with which the most powerful remedies were laid hold of and applied? It was the violent and desperate character of the disorder. This much, I trust, will suffice to illustrate the force of the argument for benevolent effort in the case of lunatics drawn from the very desperation of their case. And from this course of reasoning follows the principle, which seems obvious and of universal application,—that the more desperate the case to which benevolent effort can be applied, (provided the case be not utterly hopeless) the more pressing the call for that effort.

But our *second* reason, which affirms, that the case of lunatics is not hopeless, puts their case on this broad and tenable ground. In respect to this point, it will not be doubted, that I adduce good authority, when I quote the opinion of the Medical Convention, which originated the measures that have resulted in the establishment of the institution, to whose beneficent operations we are assembled to give the first impulse. In their report on the subject of erecting a Lunatic Asylum, presented in the form of a Memorial to the Legislature of the State—which was evidently the result of much research, and drawn up with great care—the Convention say explicitly, “that, under proper circumstances, insanity in most cases is curable, is a fact too well established to admit of doubt.” For me to attempt to add to the weight of such authority as this by multiplying testimony, I am sure, my hearers, would be to consume time unnecessarily, and to trifle with the judgments you have already made up. I cannot dismiss this part of our subject, however, without adducing the testimony of the same learned and honorable body to the high pre-eminence, which the peculiar and suffering condition of this class of our fellow men gives them to our deepest sympathies and most beneficent attention. “This then”—that their case admits of cure,—say they, “in connection with the fact that of all God’s creatures on earth, none are so awfully calculated to excite the moving sympathies of our nature to deep commiseration, as is the form of man deprived of reason, should, and it is believed will, enlist in behalf of

the scheme of your memorialists, the favorable consideration of the christian, the patriot, and the philanthropist." And in evincing the propriety of thus locating the heretofore cast off lunatic in the front rank of human sufferers, and in the fore-ground of benevolent attention and action, the Convention draw a striking and forcible contrast between the condition of the lunatic and that of the deaf mute and the blind, in whose mental and moral improvement so much effort is justly expended. "The deaf mute," continue they, "though deprived of a portion of the good gifts of a bountiful Creator, is in many respects a reasonable and intelligent creature, and susceptible of a high degree of moral and intellectual culture. The same remark will apply to the unfortunate blind. They both demand of savage and civilized man a portion of sympathetic pity; nor is there in existence a heart so cold as to be unwilling to concede the justice of such a demand. The deaf and the blind are, we say, rational creatures, both calculated to impart to their friends the means of enjoyment, and in return, to experience many of those feelings of affection and comforts of existence, which render life so desirable to the family of man. Indeed, so true is this remark, that we often see the affections of a family concentrated upon such unfortunate member, even to favoritism; and this must in some degree compensate for the privation of which the individual is the subject. But not so with him, who is insane. Himself an object of heart-rending commiseration, he is equally incapable of receiving or imparting joy. View the subjects of every variety of insanity, from the driveling idiot to the furious maniac, and what is to be seen but objects of pity, which, when disconnected with the probability that they may yet be restored to the use of reason, cannot fail to rest as a leaden weight upon every feeling heart; but which, when associated with the idea of a restoration of their senses, fill every heart with benevolent resolves.

Yes, truly; if the loss of reason and moral sense, sundering the unhappy subject of it from rational and social life, and associating him, in some important respects, with the irrational world around him;—if the extinction of all the kind and social affections of our nature, which bind mankind in social relationships, and open the chief fountains of their social endearments and comforts;—if the transformation of the once fondly cherished object of love and pleasure to an object of aversion and dread;—and if the consignment of a living creature, indued with immortality, to the grave of his social relationships, and religious privileges, and earthly comforts, and immortal hopes, where the sighs and tears of friendship; the prayers of the pious; the calls of duty, interest, and affection; and the accents of love and mercy from the cross of a bleeding Saviour, are unheeded and unavailing—if all these



appalling and heart-withering circumstances combined give the being, in whom they concentrate, a mournful pre-eminence among the children of want and of woe, and an unequalled demand on our sympathies, prayers, and efforts, then *that* is the sorrowful and the only pre-eminence, which the miserable lunatic sustains. And Oh! what heart, that is not bound up in its own selfishness, or which has not become callous at the sight of human suffering, but will respond promptly and fully to the demand, which that supremely woful condition makes upon its sympathies and efforts?

From the considerations thus far presented, we are led to the *third* truth we proposed to consider, which comes in as a fair inference from the two preceeding; and which is, that, in laboring for the benefit of lunatics to the utmost of *their* necessities and of *our* ability, we do that only to which we are prompted, encouraged, and bound by the spirit, example and inculcations of our blessed Lord and Master. By his *injunctions*, often and in a great variety of forms reiterated in both the Old Testament and the New, are we bound to "love one another," and to "love our neighbor as ourselves." By his *example*, whose life was an unbroken series of beneficent exertions: who, wherever he went, was employed in doing good to the bodies and souls of mankind to the extent of their exigencies, are we encouraged to do good to all as we have opportunity. And by his *spirit*, which was eminently and emphatically a spirit of benevolence, and which he graciously infuses into the hearts of all his followers, are we prompted to become the almoners of divine beneficence and mercy to our needy and suffering fellow men. And then—and then only do we do that for the poor, afflicted, and neglected lunatic, which we are thus bound, encouraged, and prompted to do, when according to *our abilities* we meet *his necessities*: the latter being the only measure of *his* demand; the former of *our* obligation.

Here, then, in the establishment of this Lunatic Asylum, are we furnished with pleasing and satisfactory evidence, that the people of Ohio are neither slow to learn or to do their duty towards this unhappy and forlorn class of their fellow-beings. The cries of their distresses have entered into their ears. Their wants and their miseries; yea, and the very desperation and impotency of their case, have come up before them, clad in more than sepulchral gloom, and uttering their voices as from the impenetrable regions of despair; till moved past the power of suppressing their emotions, the people have risen up in the promptings of their benevolence, and in the resources of their strength, to afford the needed and only adequate relief applicable by man. They have said to these children of wretchedness, we compassionate your condition; we grieve for the desperation and impotency of your case; we cannot con-

tentedly endure to see the noblest—the immortal powers of your nature estranged from their appropriate and wonted use, subserving no other purpose than to render your existence a useless cumbrance to society, and a grievous burden to yourselves; we feel, that you are dependent upon us for aid, if aid from earthly sources come at all; and we are resolved, that to us you shall not raise your imploring hands in vain; and that we will go to the utmost extent of our ability to mitigate your miseries—to bring back the light of reason to your benighted and bewildered souls—and to restore you to the bosom of friends, the enjoyments of social life, and the glorious privileges of the gospel of Christ, our Lord and yours. And in this spacious and magnificent edifice, in which we are assembled, my friends; in the extensive and well adapted preparations, which here meet the eye; and in this soul-cheering occasion, are we furnished with the palpable demonstration, that the people of Ohio mean what they have spoken in kindness to the miserably bereft of reason in their midst; and will carry out their resolution, touching *their* welfare, to its utmost limit.

But, as in all similar enterprises, so in this, there was a primary cause, and a primary mover. And propriety and justice both require, that we should trace the origin and progress of this institution thus far. The original cause, which gave rise to it, is to be found in the fact, that no institution existed in the State at all adapted to meet the wants of this suffering portion of the community. This deficiency, showing the unkind, unfeeling, and criminal oversight of this class of the public objects of charity, was seen and deplored by certain gentlemen of the medical profession particularly. Their hearts were stirred within them to devise some project, by which this astounding deficiency in the system of public benevolence might be supplied. And as the *only* practicable method, which suggested itself, of getting the subject, which weighed so heavily upon their own minds, before the public mind, and of reaching the object they had in view, they resolved upon the calling of a medical convention for the purpose of discussing this in connection with other subjects of a benevolent and professional character. A circular calling such a convention—of which the gentleman who has been placed at the head of this institution was the author—was accordingly issued, and produced the first desired result. A Medical Convention assembled in this city on the 5th of January, 1835, embodying a respectable number of the medical profession, and no small share of the medical talent in the State. True to all the important purposes of their coming together, that Convention entered promptly and in earnest upon two great and prominent subjects of attention, as set forth in the circular—viz: ‘The erection and location of Public Asylums for the reception of Lu-



natics, and the instruction of the Blind." The result of their deliberations on these topics was, *first*, the adoption of a report expressing the opinion of the Convention, that it was the duty of the State to erect an institution for the instruction of the Blind, and commending the subject to the special attention of the Assembly of the State then in session; and *second*, the adoption of another report, which declares, that "humanity and the character of the State of Ohio, call imperiously for the erection of an Asylum that will be creditable to the State, and in all respects adapted to the relief and cure of Mental Derangement;" and in the transmission of a memorial to the Legislature, praying in strong language the establishment of such an institution.

The honorable body, before whom those deeply affecting subjects were now laid, and with whom it rested to check, for a time, at least, their progress, or to give them an onward and accelerated impetus, that should carry them forward to the consummation so devoutly wished, as though catching the spirit of the Convention, fired with a noble zeal, that could not have expended itself in a better cause, and with an unflinching promptitude and determined energy, that in relation to such matters, have scarce a parallel in the history of legislation, and which are beyond all praise, proceeded forthwith to enact the establishment of the two institutions proposed by the Convention, and on as liberal and extensive a basis as could be desired; following out thus the benevolent plan, begun by the Legislature of 1836-7, which established the Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb. With the same spirit of promptitude and energy, which had characterized so strongly all the previous steps in relation to these institutions, was the work of erecting this Asylum undertaken, and has thus far been prosecuted; so that, within less than four years from the time the design was first broached, has that work attained such a state of completion as to leave comparatively a trifle to be done, and as to invite to its spacious halls and neatly finished apartments as many of the mentally diseased as it would be practicable and safe to subject to its beneficent and healing operations during the first rotations of its machinery.

We, my friends, are this day assembled to witness and to sanction the starting of this engine of mighty physical and moral power, which, we trust, is destined to work the mental and moral soundness of many a diseased and afflicted soul. And while surveying the noble structure, which embosoms and concentrates this enginery, we admire the neatness, spaciousness, adaptation, and perfection of all its parts, creditable alike to the liberality of the State, the skill of the architect, and the fidelity of the builders;—a structure, which, for its complete adaptation to the purposes, for which it was designed, probably knows no parallel

in this, or in any other country; we admire still more the two prominent features developed in the history of this institution, and which are permanently impressed upon every particle of the material of which its structure is composed, and upon every movement of its extensive machinery. The first of these features is, that it is purely a benevolent institution, designed primarily and chiefly for the poor, who have the preference of admission to its benefits; and the second is, that it is entirely the offspring and nursling of the State. It is one of the three offspring of her munificence, constituting a fraternal triad, of which she may well boast. No other State in the Union, it may be confidently affirmed, can present a similar fraternity, the offspring of her own benevolence. In this species of State enterprise and improvement, therefore, Ohio is in advance of all her sister States; and that, too, in the thirty-sixth year of her State existence.

The expense the State has incurred in erecting this Asylum, amounts to about sixty thousand dollars. But what constitutes a remarkable and interesting feature in relation to this expenditure, and which goes to show the wise and economical policy of the State, is the fact, that the entire work of making the brick, and of putting up the edifice has been done by the unhappy convicts in her Penitentiary; and who have also sustained a large amount of the labor of advancing it to its present stage of completion. And thus has she made the crimes of one portion of her citizens to contribute largely to the benefit of another; converting the poison, drawn by the one from the body politic for their destruction, into a rich nutriment and healing balsam for the support and health of the other.

Surely it is hazarding nothing of truth to say, that in her benevolent institutions, Ohio stands unrivalled; and that in the precocity of her benevolent enterprises, she presents a perfect anomaly in the annals of government. In the three noble and kindred institutions, which she has founded and sustains, she has in her horizon a threefold constellation, which will shine for her benefit, and to her glory, so long as *they* shall continue to diffuse their healing beams, or the *memory* of those, upon whom those beams have fallen with healing power, shall remain the undecaying record of the past.

This day, my hearers, forms a bright era in the history of your State; and a joyful era, I doubt not, in the history of your lives. Some of you can recur to the time,—and that time has but just gone by,—when the beautiful and well-selected spot, upon which this noble edifice stands, was a dense forest. That forest you have seen retire as by magic to give place to the institution, which from this day commences its work of mercy;—a work, to which you have contributed, and in which your hearts rejoice;—a work, for the success of which, in all



future time, you desire, and you crave the blessing of *Him*, who alone is able to "establish the work of our hands upon us." What then remains but to bid this institution God-speed; while we leave behind us the sacred pledge, that we will not cease to remember it and its poor inmates in our prayers so long as life lasts, with the pleasing hope of participating with thousands, who shall have been made mentally and morally whole at this Bethesda, in the pure, enrapturing, and never ending enjoyments of that world, no inhabitant of which shall ever say, "I am sick"; and where every power of every one of its blest inhabitants shall bloom in health and vigor while "immortality endures."